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# BELGIUM'S POLICY IN THE BELGIAN CONGO



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# BELGIUM'S POLICY IN THE BELGIAN CONGO

Address by Governor-General L. Pétillon to  
the Council of the Government of the Belgian  
Congo, in Leopoldville on July 18, 1955.

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GENTLEMEN,

A few days ago, H.M. King Baudouin pronounced, at the Royal African Club in Brussels, an important speech. Its reverberations prolong and amplify the far-reaching echo, which his recent voyage to the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi provoked.

After Léopold II, the founder; Albert Ist, the promoter of scientific research; Léopold III, the pioneer of agriculture and of native farming, it seems that Baudouin Ist could be, for the Congo of his epoch—with the acute sense of the ever-changing necessities of the time, which all our Monarchs have shown—the Social King.

The apex of the speech of the King is indeed contained in these sentences which I recall to you:

"The essential question which is now raised in the Congo, I am anxious to emphasize, is that of human relations between the blacks and the whites.

"It is not sufficient to equip the country, to endow it with wise social legislation, to improve the standard of living of its inhabitants; it is necessary that the whites and the natives give evidence, in their daily contacts, of the broadest mutual understanding.

"Then the moment will have come—the date cannot yet be determined—to give to our African territories a status which will guarantee, for the happiness of all, the perennality of a true Belgo-Congolese community and which will assure to each one, black and white, the share which is due him according to his merits and his capacity, in the government of the country."

Must I say at length here that the King's words, lofty, pertinent, and clear—which will henceforward guide our action—give us great joy, because they approve and confirm the direction in which we have oriented our efforts and attempted to make the populations of this country progress.

That the sovereign, with the august authority which is attached to his royal function, has assigned to us as an ideal to be attained this Belgo-Congolese community on which we constantly insist, gives us a new assurance and an undying faith in the future.



### **The future Belgo-Congolese Community**

Today, everyone wishes that this Belgo-Congolese community would come to be; more and more numerous are those who speak about it; certain people are preoccupied with this question and are apprehensive, wondering how, in the actual order of things the two ethnic groups will conduct themselves.

For, the solution that we have chosen is the most difficult.

When one tries to enumerate the eventualities and to synthesize the doctrines, one arrives fundamentally at three possible attitudes: either the groups may stay apart; or else, they may fuse; or, they may associate with one another.

—Juxtaposition—or, in other words, discrimination, separation is not really a solution. It does not imply a new society nor even, can one say, organic relationships: the groups are established one next to the other in the same territorial entity and the only true problem is to assure the domination of one over the other when the relationships which life imposes on them arise.

We reject this system because it is contrary to our temperament and cannot bring lasting results.

—Fusion—or assimilation—is a possibility more in conformity with our concepts and our democratic ideal, which would lead to the building of a country populated with whites who have remained what they are—with certain necessary and, besides, inevitable adaptations—and of blacks, who have become so similar to the whites, that inequalities, by the natural evolution of things, would tend to disappear.

We believe that that solution—admissible in consideration of a progressively broader application in the course of time—cannot be considered the only one. First, because it is scarcely realizable on a large enough scale; then, because it would end much more in an absorption than a fusion, in the simplistic substitution of Western civilization for Bantu customs. However, we are not rejecting it: after a long time, perhaps the future will take charge of establishing it in vast regions and in the intimacy of minds and hearts. I call your attention to the fact that actually we are already applying it—complete in its principle, limited in its scope—by the registration and the progressive assimilation of the best and most evolved of our wards.

—To this solution, unsatisfactory for us who are preoccupied with the masses of natives, must be added—answering more universal and immediate needs—a more pragmatic and up-to-date regime.

It does not only involve the assimilation with us and the integration into our institutions and our life of an ever increasing number of individuals of the elite; but it means that throughout the territory, on the basis of sincerity of understanding, and spontaneity of feeling—we are going to attach to ourselves, to make live, progress, and elevate with ourselves, the men of this country whom circumstances or their will keep in their ancestral milieu.

To those—who will be for a long time the greatest number—whom it cannot be a question of segregating from ourselves in order to subjugate them, nor to assimilate them with ourselves to diminish them, we must offer—while organizing it in such a way that they accept it enthusiastically—a possibility of association.

### **Association between the two groups**

Association implies reciprocal rights and privileges. We, the non-natives and the assimilated natives, will have ours; they will have theirs. The education, which we must give them, will make them understand the nature and the extent of these rights and privileges.

Must I say, why, from all indications, the most difficult solution is there? That it can be achieved only with prudence, according to a plan that takes into account at the same time the whole view and the parties concerned, the principles and the contingencies, the convergences and the divergences, and that it will have to be constantly readapted?

It is the most difficult, and however, we have chosen it because it appears best to us. We must now put it in operation.

Truthfully, have we *chosen* it? As for me, I do not think so. It has rather been imposed upon us, as the safest and most efficient ways impose themselves upon sensible and practical people. For there are few theorists among us. History had us placed, in the course of time, in a favorable position to observe and learn from the experiences of others. That is simply what we have done.

I have tried, to recall, in as few simple words as possible, the systems among which, without our necessarily having had to make a choice, the spectacle of human affairs and the lessons which proceed from them, stimulate us to orient our action.

I am now going to attempt to explain, first of all, what, under present-day circumstances, we must do or avoid, and secondly, the new formations and developments that we must anticipate, in order to safeguard, to consolidate, and to extend this Belgo-Congolese community, which we have made our principal concern and our dearest hope.



### **The present position**

In the countries of old civilization, solidly established and well organized, the interests of individuals and of groups are egotistically defended. One must even consider that the defense of these interests, according to norms established by law, constitutes the basis for democracy.

In the young and fragile countries, where the new societies are building themselves up and are seeking their destiny, this is no longer admissible to the same extent. There, to the contrary, each one has to accept in favor of and for the benefit of the others, his share of sacrifice; has to give evidence of a noble spirit of understanding and of charity—for the lack of which stable and durable societies never will be born.

So it must be in the Congo, if we want the Belgo-Congolese Community to be created.

I said to you three years ago, "Starting today and not tomorrow, let us favor all that which draws us close together, avoid all that which separates us, encourage all the occasions for building up, both on a moral and a material plane, a real solidarity."

Among that which separates, it is necessary to denounce in the first place the attitude of indifference, of antipathy, indeed even of hostility which certain persons adopt in regard to certain others. Nothing is more irreparably evil than to inflict without discernment wounds to self-respect which, everywhere and throughout time, were those which embittered most rapidly. In our country, proportionately as time passes, their gravity increases. Fortunately, their frequency is diminishing, but those now being made go deeper. It happens that they may be provoked by individuals whose rearing and development, titles and function, render them so much more guilty.

For this sad state of affairs, one could find numerous reasons. The principal one appears to me to reside in the indifference of many Europeans for all that which concerns native thought and life. It is not possible for human beings to know one another and appreciate one another, without associating with each other. It is by these direct, daily continuous contacts, in the factories, in the shops, the offices, that we have succeeded in inculcating in the Africans a spirit, a method of work, a deportment worthy of the functions which we have handed down to them. But human relationships must transcend the exigencies of working together. It is not good that the bell which tolls or the siren which screams marks, at the same time, the end of labor and the separation of those which it unites. The African who originally depended almost exclusively on us to teach him the way to earn an honest living, has

today other preoccupations born of the needs which we have indirectly imposed upon him. Thus, our economic duty accomplished, our social obligation begins. It is time that we dedicate ourselves with sincerity, humility, and devotion to this task of which our ancestors had understood the greatness and the necessity.

In the course of this year, despite so many exhortations, incidents have still taken place which have made me determined to ask the Minister of Colonies to have organized, in the colonial offices under his jurisdiction, courses in deontology and lectures devoted to the teaching of the duties of humanity and of decency incumbent upon the personnel of the Colony towards the registered natives, the bearers of the card of civic merit and all the autochthons.

But, these duties are not only reserved for public officials. There are still too many Europeans who, vested with an authority which they have over others or which they arrogate to themselves, impart in their relationships with the natives an odious characteristic of bold condescension, mortifying familiarity, and sometimes, of abruptness or of brutality. There are still—I am referring to certain individuals who, I hope, will recognize themselves—men—and women—who by words, writings, gestures, or attitudes, behave here as if they were in a conquered country.

The moment seems to have come to say to those people, as Governor General Eboué said under other circumstances: "If anyone does not agree with us on the chosen policy, we do not bear him any ill will; he will be able to go away. We say to him with courtesy, good-bye."

I have just treated premeditated and deliberate acts and attitudes.

Be on guard as well for certain unconscious actions, which do as much if not more harm.

### **Insists on simplicity**

No one disputes that he who comes from afar to work in the tropics has a right to a remuneration higher than that which he would deserve in his country, that for the European it is a necessity to lead in Africa an easier existence, that he must be able to compensate, through the distractions that the country affords, for the gentler pleasures of which his exile deprives him, and even that his prestige or the renown of those whom he represents calls for a certain display.



But nothing — other than stupid snobism and useless vanity — obliges him to demand a higher value for himself and to act in an ostentatious manner.

If the Europeans lived only among themselves, the harm would affect only those who take part in inflicting it. But the point is that they are no longer only among themselves; eyes unceasingly more numerous and from day to day more attentive, watch them.

There is not only resentment for an injustice suffered, bitterness for a lack of consideration, discouragement for an effort badly rewarded which are dangerous sentiments when they dwell in the heart of the crowd. Envy also can become a frightening motive, so much more formidable as it obsesses and torments human beings in a better position to understand and to compare.

I know that this must sound like a sermon and that many, for the lack of something better to do, will ridicule it. To those I give a brief but firm piece of advice: let them read the stern and prophetic speeches pronounced, in 1951, by a certain governor of a neighboring colony . . .

If we wish, as it is now clearly our intention, to begin to live together in association with each other, we must avoid, in our every-day behavior, that the veil of certain intangible factors between us does not end by becoming an impassible barrier. For that, the best recipe to be applied in our contacts is simplicity.

This is worth as much if not more for the *evoluant*s\*—who will be the first to be admitted to this communal life—as for the Europeans. Because, if the latter sin through vanity and flightiness, the former—as paradoxical as that may seem—sin through pride. And there is no worse form of pride and—if certain people in the evolved group permit me to say it to them—more revolting, than that cultivated by those who having even very feeble merits and suffering inwardly for their own insufficiency, take on the airs of martyrs. There is not a more stupid attitude than to impute loosely the thousand inevitable difficulties of life and all that goes wrong to European authority.

Education and particularly training are matters requiring long and exacting work and humble and persevering efforts. The setting up of new judicial regimes—such as registration—the creation of more organic possibilities in the material order—such as the accession to real estate, the classification and elevation of positions, the adaptation of remunerations and related advantages—can only favor them, not be bestowed upon them, as one would present a generous gift. Has it not been said

\* By *evoluant*s are understood those Congolese who are adapting themselves, inwardly and outwardly, to the ways of Western civilization.

over and over: it will take generations, here as elsewhere, for the impatience of those who wish to ascend to be satisfied, no matter what may be the individual or collective steps, specific or general, that one will take, without slackening, to succeed as soon as possible.

Until then, I repeat, in order to be able to live together, it is necessary for both groups to be simple: on one side, to be simple in order, despite superiority, intelligence, fortune, refinement—to accept and to understand, to like and to participate; on the other side, to be humble and simple in order, despite needs, ignorance, diffidence, to advance and to learn, to exert oneself and to progress without haste and without bragging. On both sides, to give as much as one receives and never forget that, within the framework of the Belgian community, we have undertaken together to form a people and to forge a country.

### **Capital and labor**

Capitalism and its expansive forces—if it ceased to be, as it is in this country, tempered and, as it were, glorified by social concern and generosity—could also constitute an element of dissociation rather than of union in the midst of a human society which is being born.

The exigencies of the free modern world and its doctrines have established strict relationships between capital and labor, between organized function and human personality.

Elsewhere in the world these relationships concluded sometimes serious and long social struggles. We have avoided these struggles in the Congo because the wisdom of the employers has rendered them useless; because the demands of the employees and laborers, always anticipated, were without purpose; because the public officials, cognizant of the importance of their eminent role as trustees of the natives and guardians of the social peace, have always taken suitable measures in time.

All that, it must be said and recalled, was facilitated by the fine and lasting prosperity of the Congo which became apparent (I shall abstain from citing the eloquent figures which result from our studies) upon examination of the actual return on capital in this country.

This return—in certain cases extremely high—permits not only a generous remuneration of the stockholders, but also sizable amortizations, continual autofinancing and the setting up of very large reserves of diverse natures.

All that consolidates, nourishes, and increases the Congolese prosperity.



That also permits us to look at the future with confidence because capital is thus, from year to year, better prepared to fulfill, in favor of our fragile Belgo-Congolese community, the helpful role which would be incumbent upon it, if the conjuncture happened to weaken. In another connection and in the more immediate order of things, it must be noted that capital has the power to implement, while the prosperity lasts, a social policy which the acquired and tested results can render sometimes more generous.

I ardently hope that it can be accomplished in the future as it has been done in the past, under the aegis of the State, by a constant and efficient agreement between the representatives of the employers and those of the employees.

It is on the condition that it be so that we will be able to keep the pledge that we have taken here, in 1952, to preserve the Congo from certain metropolitan conflicts. Already then, we were speaking the language of today: "All that which divides us can only endanger our chances of creating here a harmonious society."

With all due respect to certain people, because they are too directly concerned, or to others, because they do not know anything of Congolese affairs, the time has come to reflect seriously about it. Does one not now see debates being organized in social matters, upon the initiative of persons whose function it is to do so, in the course of which our problems are shown from an angle, as false as unusual, and intrigues being developed to terminate in the "politization" of organs and of associations which could be improved in a thousand other ways if they no longer entirely gave satisfaction.

#### ***Tolerance as a basis of society***

A happy society, a stable community must be built on the solid ground of tolerance.

There was a time, still quite recent, when in this country, tolerance was not at all in fashion. The country had to be explored, one had to take possession of it, to study it, and to organize it, to seize it with both arms and to elevate it. The tasks were heavy but simple. The customs were harsh, the opinions cutting and the methods without discretion. Everyone had his domain, his sector, his mission. He had to know with clarity what he wanted, to weigh with care his responsibilities, to realize his ambitions with firmness. Controversies on ideas, on systems, or even

on the modes of action were a thing unknown because often they were without actual sustenance or future. Everybody had an exclusive and complete goal toward which he was going without preoccupying himself with the progress of others, whose paths rarely crossed his own. It was the time of the pioneers.

Later, things became more complicated. Little by little the domains overlapped, relationships intertwined, actions became complementary. More and more, we had to discuss, to act in concert, and to adjust. But no thought was yet given to the unique human community which would rise from the varied realizations that each day one provoked. The Colony was being organized: the administration, the missions, business were in place and were developing. However confusedly, one felt that a new thing was going to come, had to come.

Then, everything moved very rapidly. All of a sudden men realized what they had created and what that was going to require of them in new structures. The Congo thus found itself; despite the brevity of time which had marked its evolution, it was already no longer a colony; it was becoming a country.

For some time now, the Congo has not been preoccupying itself with the same care with its administration which is solid, stable, efficient and which institutes reforms as necessity requires them; with its justice which is administered with an amplitude unceasingly growing in serenity and integrity; with its equipment which is obtained according to a program bold and prudent at the same time; with its business which progresses and develops constantly. What concerns it today are the great human problems, that of relations among the groups which comprise it and of their internal organization, that of its institutions.

#### ***Public opinion is born***

For public opinion is born in the country, becomes stronger, and is expressed. Its means of expression, official and private, multiply. It claims to know the problems of the Congo and to be preoccupied with them; it wishes to be listened to and consulted; through its representatives, it wants to influence the solution of problems and the direction of policy.

Thus the Congo shows that it is discovering its conscience.

Up to now, this public opinion was, on the whole, remarkably flexible and coherent. Rarely did it lag behind more than was suitable

to the study of various aspects and to barren discussions; almost always, it was voiced with a great moderation of tendency and of tone; often, it disciplined itself and concentrated itself, for the solution of fundamental problems, in a unanimity which emphasized its strength.

As Governor General, I have the duty—with all influential men in this so vast and diversified territory—to guide this opinion and to inform it of the absolute necessity, in the interest of the Congo, to practice still and always the tolerance of which it has, in the past, given such fine and constant examples.

Tolerance of private interests in regard to each other, whatever may be their nature, their extent, their original monopolizing tendency; tolerance of the groupings of interests in regard to goals and ideologies, sometimes opposed and contradictory, that they represent; tolerance, as I have said, among men, whatever may be the civilization to which they belong, their degree of evolution, the concepts and the customs of life to which they remain attached or from which they would like to free themselves; tolerance with regard to the innovations of ideas, of aspirations, of methods and of means of action which the growth and the progressive maturity of this country on the one hand implies and on the other hand must have accepted.

But, in the same capacity, I also have the duty of acting as the interpreter of this opinion.

Now, what the great majority of the inhabitants of this country do not wish is that their problems be solved as if they were metropolitan contingencies.

The Congo has in common with Belgium higher interests which determine the life of the nation and its destiny. This destiny is noble, precise, without ambiguity, and recalls, once more, the links which attach us—forever—to the mother country and its greatness.

Links which, moreover, unite us to her even to the extent of the daily government of the country and which makes this truly the Belgian policy—in the highest sense of the word—which we are applying here according to the directions Belgium gives through her Minister of Colonies, her Colonial Council and her Parliament.

While it is then assuredly justifiable, and even desirable, that the metropolitan parties have a doctrine for colonial matters, still it is suitable that they never forget:

1. that the Congo has its specific problems, to which must be found solutions conforming with the common good of its populations, solutions based only on the elements which an objective study reveals;

2. that the Congo is not supported, as in the home country, by definitive institutions, within the framework of stabilized social relationships and a formed economy, but that it is—on all levels—a country in the making, which requires that its affairs be conducted, under penalty of profound disorganization, according to the principle of the greatest continuity—above and beyond all the doctrines.

Of course, I am thinking at this time, as you are all thinking, notably of the school question which a recent incident has rendered a burning issue and which has provoked so many repercussions in all circles.

#### **Lay schools necessary**

Was not, however, the establishment of certain forms of lay teaching necessary and justifiable? In the face of constantly growing needs, in this sector as in so many others, was it not indispensable that the State take measures which duty dictates to it, which is incumbent upon it, to instruct, with respect for all the beliefs and opinions, a youth which is coming forward each day in greater numbers?

I, for one, regret that we have not done so earlier and that the declarations in this sense, made already a long time ago and notably my own, on various occasions, have not been followed by more immediate and more sincere results. Thus, we would have proved our objectivity of mind; we would have shown, once more, that the Congo is governed outside of all partisan considerations and exclusively in sympathy with its own necessities; we would have permitted the present government to pursue a work begun by us, in a serenity to which we might have contributed.

Instead of that, which could have been accomplished calmly, one has seen in each camp—arrant blunders committed even directly in regard to the cause that one wished to serve.

All that—I say it, as I have said and will say all the rest, with a complete independence of existing factions—is distressing.

For, in the Congo, one should not start scorning one another and hating one another. It ought not to be permitted that the inhabitants of this country—I am thinking, above all, of the natives—be led into false conflicts, nor enlisted in factions of which the artificial demands incite them to attitudes hostile without cause. It ought to be



avoided at any cost that, in turns, one triumphs in the majority or militates in the opposition, with the deplorable ways of doing so which that implies, according to whether—justifiably but for reasons which are strange to us—one or the other party is in power in Europe.

There, is what I believed I had to say to you in the interest of our common cause—whatever may be the displeasure for me: that of the Belgo-Congolese Community which we wish to form together.

This first chapter has treated, with that goal in mind, the behavior of those who compose it.

The following chapter will be devoted, in the larger framework of the policy which we have stated before on several occasions, to the new institutions that we intend to create in order to assure to this Community more organic foundations.

## II—NEW INSTITUTIONS ARE PLANNED

I believe it was necessary to indicate, first of all, what changes must be made in certain practices or in what might become practices, without which the best decrees would never be anything but empty words and the policy of association, a myth.

But once minds and hearts are prepared and united, the institutions must in their turn tend towards the common goal: adequately conceived and skillfully executed, they will aid in evoking harmonious aspirations in all inhabitants of the Congo, black and white.

It is in that sense—I recall it to you because I attach the greatest importance to initiate new studies only in the old framework:

1. that in 1952 and in 1953, we prepared in the Permanent Delegation\* the projected new Statute of Cities, which I have always said must be considered as a test which will reveal the tendencies of the legislator.

2. that in 1953 and in 1954, we initiated the reform of the Provincial Councils, the Governmental Councils and its Delegation, of which we shall pursue the study in the course of the present session;

3. that, in the present speech, I shall discuss with you the realizations and the plans which will concur in the transformation of our advanced and rural native districts into communal entities.

The texts which, in the course of this session are proposed for your deliberations have already been submitted to the Provincial Councils; I do not doubt that you will treat them with the great consideration they deserve.

### Communal organization

Belgium is rich in political traditions; they express a certain balance attained at the price of secular struggles and, as such, answer the aspirations of the nation. For this very reason, it is evident that her institutions are not adapted to the Congolese populations.

\* The Permanent Delegation is an advisory body of the Congo Government.

Nevertheless, as people and things evolve, it is legitimate and normal that—attached as we are to the Mother Country—we would bring here from home the spirit which must vivify the new organs that we wish to put into motion, provided, of course, that the adaptations are made which the evident differences in structure require.

The word “communes” is striking and it is because the communal period evokes in the memory of the Belgians an era of progress and of splendor that we have made it our ambition to give to the Congo its communes.

Besides, would one not say that our projected decree on the Statute of the Cities is a first and significant outline of this development?

To make communes is not only to construct belfries. It is to create at the same time the political framework, and I insist upon it, to construct indispensable foundations on administrative, economic and social planes.

The plan which is submitted to you answers four fundamental problems:

1. to give to the Congolese communities—to all the communities whatever may be their structure and the degree of evolution—a single status but adaptable to the particular situation of each one of them;
2. to provoke or increase *the participation of the populations in public life*;
3. to prepare the integration of the communities thus organized, in a hierarchy of Councils, more elevated and more widespread;
4. to begin the transformation of our rural villages into communal entities.

Up to the present the proper legal texts rule the Cities, the Native Districts (including the Chieftain Districts and the various Sectors) the Evolved Centers and the Native Towns. Each one of these communities has its specific rules of structure and of administration.

This distinction has become very artificial in time.

At first it appeared that the legislation on the advanced native settlements had to be reviewed along lines to conform with the new status of the towns. But in the course of the study undertaken to this end, it was observed that, if this legislation had become obsolete and no longer answered the needs nor the aspirations of the populations, it was the same for the legislation which ruled the Native Districts.

Undoubtedly, the ways of life of the communities of the centers and of the bush are still, in the majority of cases, quite different. But, on the one hand, the political formation that we wish to favor presents the same necessity for all: the peasants as well as the city dwellers must

evolve towards a democratic organization; on the other hand, certain rural districts have attained or will be able to attain in the near future a degree of evolution comparable to that of the centers.

I am thinking for instance of these semi-rural populations, established at the outskirts of the centers, which long contact with these centers has in part detribalized and for which the traditional regime has, to the extent that it has been applied, ceased to be fitting. I am thinking more particularly of certain populations which, possessing cultivated lands, pasture lands, timberlands, and producing their food there, raise their cattle, sink and exploit their wells, plant and prune their trees, but also, offer their services in the enterprises of the neighboring towns. All the professions are represented there, from the laborer to the most qualified craftsman. Half-peasants, half wage-earners, these people maintain neighborly relationships both with the townsmen and with the shepherds or the farmers attached to native life. The local authorities have proposed to make green towns of these settlements. There, the political apprenticeship of the inhabitants answers right now a need; thus it is there that the test must be made because the conditions there are the most favorable.

One thus arrives at the conclusion that it would be nefarious for the evolution of certain rural groups, to crystalize by separate texts, the differentiation that we had established between them and the people of the centers. The new regime would have to be flexible enough to be adapted to all cases and avoid establishing categories which would solidify situations leaving intermediate cases without an appropriate solution.

The means of arriving at it is to condense into one single decree the fundamental measures appropriate for all the communities, from the most retarded to the most advanced; next, to specify in what way and on what occasions the guardianship of the representatives of the central authority will be exercised, and to trust in the wisdom of these representatives to determine, according to the circumstances and the degree of evolution of each district, the duties to be performed for which direct assistance remains provisionally necessary.

#### ***Native participation in public life***

To inspire or increase the participation of the populations in public life is the second problem with which this project is concerned.

1. This implies on the one hand, the education of the masses and its representatives and on the other hand, the formation of a conscientious and capable administrative staff.



The training of the masses, outside of the general education that we give them—is confused with their political formation and is a matter of civic spirit. It should be considered that certain populations have attained such a degree of development that their indifference—which, moreover, diminishes as they advance—in regard to that which concerns the general interest, no longer has any excuse. They must take up their responsibilities and be given their rights. The others, all the others, will make good their delay little by little since, in short, the efforts that we are exerting are not directed towards any other goal.

It is essential, on the other hand, that the training of the representatives of the population, whether or not they are appointed by it according to what will appear to be reasonable standards, be the object of our immediate preoccupations.

For, the representative council that they will form will have to (in the manner of our community councils) exercise certain regulatory and budgetary powers, watch over the execution of the laws and decisions, supervise the administration of community property, briefly to be the organ capable of accounting to the current electoral body of local authority.

To set up this communal executive group and its administrative framework, there are on the one hand the traditional authorities, on the other hand the new elite.

#### **The task of the old chiefs**

In their great majority, the traditional chiefs are elements of value; even among those who lack education, there are those who enjoy great prestige; many of them establish, in a satisfactory manner, the contacts between the European administration and the populations whose resources, needs and aspirations they know. They are among the most precious collaborators that Belgium has on African soil. They have worked under often difficult circumstances, executing orders whose scope exceeded their understanding, in a spirit of trusting submission. Therefore, we have decided that it was necessary to compensate them in relation to the importance of their responsibilities, present and future, and have just raised their salary.

Far be it from me to minimize their merit or to slight the importance of their services. But we have to admit that except for a very small number, they are rooted in the tradition that they personify, and envision only with reserve and anxiety an order of things different from that over which they preside. It is up to us to make them, and especially

their successors, understand that we wish only that their institutions develop in such a way as to make of them instruments of progress.

Moreover, the ever-increasing multiplicity and the diversity of the tasks of the chief call for the creation of administrative machinery and, as far as possible, the separation of the executive and judicial powers. The collection of duties and taxes, the preparation of the cadastral survey (plan of commune), the registration of the vital statistics, the administration of public thoroughfares, the execution of social works, the setting up and running of the record office of the provinces require a specialized and trained personnel. Besides, the chief no longer has the peace of mind nor the necessary time to fulfill his function of judge; therefore, whenever custom permits, he must be relieved of this obligation.

#### **Training the elite for administrative tasks**

That is why we thought that, in order to instruct the future rural authorities and their assistants in their tasks, it was necessary to create a system of instruction which might give an authentic administrative and civic training to the sons of chiefs and notables and to all the young natives called upon to exercise a function in their rural milieu.

Furthermore, it is not exclusively a matter of specialized instruction; the pupils must be assured a solid general training which will permit them eventually to request other functions or to attempt other activities. But it is deemed necessary that this program be organized in the very districts where the functions taught are to be exercised, in order to inculcate in their officials a spirit of healthy regionalism and to familiarize them with the tangible aspects of public office.

Two levels of education are planned, corresponding to the minor and the responsible positions. These schools will be directed by an experienced member of the territorial service, assisted by a pedagogue chosen from the teaching personnel.

A first step has been envisaged for the near future: three schools of administration will be opened in the provinces for which the need is the most pressing: Equator, Kasai and the East Province.

At the same time we shall anticipate an adaptation of the program of the existing secondary schools, especially as regards civic formation, in such a way as to permit their pupils to become oriented in communal occupations, if they so desire.

2. To encourage or increase the participation of the populations in public life also implies that it is necessary to confer upon the districts



communal autonomy to the extent that the formation and popular control of those whom they administer would allow.

To be autonomous, is above all to control one's own finances.

Through a series of measures that your Permanent Delegation has recently approved, the legislator will allow additional quotas in the duty to be increased from 40 to 70% and will authorize the creation of non-compensatory taxes. It is a first step towards fiscal autonomy.

### **Communal domain**

Besides, it is necessary that the districts possess a domain. The assignment to the advanced centers of the lands in their jurisdiction had already been decided. The Royal Decree of December 19, 1949 for the center of the Katanga and the projected decree of the Cities were resolutely conceived in this view.

The existence of a private domain calls for strict regulations and the capacity to extract from them the benefit that a prudent administration would authorize. This problem must be initiated and resolved without particular apprehension.

The setting up of assets and the creation of receipts to tend to financial autonomy without contrivances would necessitate the total suppression of imposed works not having an educational nature, in such a way that the obligations which the districts met by means of a non-compensated manpower may henceforward have to be paid for with their money. Shortly, it will also be an accomplished fact.

However, we must see to it that the burdens of the native communities are bearable.

The maintenance of the road network of local interest such as it was conceived up to now might exceed the means of most people. Therefore, the State undertook on its own account a part of the expense since the beginning of this year; besides, we have placed under study, to be applied starting next year, a reclassification of the roads reducing the proportion of those which we call "of local interest."

Furthermore, the development of the communal administration will considerably increase public expenses. It was, therefore, fitting to provide, a priori, that each district be able to fulfill its tasks properly, and to conceive of an adequate system of subsidization until, after a long initial period which is beginning, complete financial autonomy can be foreseen and instituted. That is why the system of subsidies has been re-examined and will in the future be based on new principles which will go into effect in 1956. We are expecting notably a simplification of the duties of the territorial administrator as manager of the credits of the Colony, more faithful respect for financial soundness, a

calmer management of the coffers of the chefferies,\* an activity becoming more and more predominantly that of native authorities.

But, it will not suffice for native communities to manage their ordinary receipts and expenses from day to day. As every public administration, they will have to be able to proceed with community investments and with the equipment that our reform calls for. Communities, like men, need starting capital. Therefore, the districts are authorized to contract loans under certain conditions.

The National Savings Bank, which collects the available funds of the richest communities, is normally indicated to lend to the poorest the funds which they need. Later, it will be necessary to establish an institution which would have a statute similar to the Communal Bank of Belgium, founded on the principle of the coöperatives. The first step will be accomplished without difficulty; the scope that the credit will have, and which will be the reflection of the desired evolution, will tell us when the establishment of an autonomous organism is justified.

3. It thus appears that we intend henceforward to substitute a regime of guardianship for the paternalism that we have practiced up to the present: the representatives of European authority will only continue to intervene as animators, advisers and inspectors.

A balance must be established between the two elements which serve as counterweights for the liberal administration of the communities: popular control on one side, European guardianship on the other. Proportionately, as the first falters, it is essential that the second be more closely exercised. One should not have any illusions in this regard: a careful guardianship will have to compensate for the insufficiency of popular control for a long time to come. Nevertheless, is it to be expected that it will ever disappear entirely since, as everywhere, the local powers here remain subordinate to the higher instances of authority?

As the decree of July 14, 1952 on the political organization of Ruanda-Urundi already provides, the action of territorial authority will be exercised a priori, by means of councils and a posteriori, by means of veto. The text which is submitted to you specifies the duties and the powers of the authority in this respect: the success of the new regime evidently depends in large measure on the tact with which the administrator of the territory and his assistants exercise their tutelary function. Just as they will have to remain vigilant toward the backward communities and be uncompromising when, as must be anticipated, abuses develop, so they must be discreet and unobtrusive, when the communal authorities merit their confidence.

\* A chefferie is a community under the administration of a local chief.



### **Coöperation on a higher plane**

The third point with which our plans deal is to create a favorable climate for collaboration on the higher plane of the Belgo-Congolese community.

For the cities, we have visualized a regime which makes allowances for the duality in fact which exists between the African and the European cities, a duality which dominates and tempers administrative unity in all that concerns the general interest and towards which we wish to tend more and more.

For still more evident reasons, it is inconceivable that on the level of the native communities of the interior, the assemblies be homogenous for still a long time. But it is necessary, here also, to anticipate a level of coordination and of cooperation of the local administrations, on the one hand with those which surround them, on the other hand with the European population.

That will have to be accomplished with the flexibility desirable, in creating mixed councils in the territories and the districts, councils whose essential and local competency will have to be within the range of understanding and capacity of the men who compose them. There would be certain danger in the beginning, to create these organs abstractly and to impose them everywhere with the same methods. It will therefore be necessary that the local authorities experiment with a theory, adapted to the necessities of each region, in several places judiciously chosen, and put it to the test.

The program that I outlined in 1952 would thus be realized, little by little, as a foundation, on which is to be constructed later—the last step of our reform—the pyramid of the Territorial and District Councils, crowned by the Provincial and Government Councils.

### **Social and economic problems**

However, it is not sufficient to organize politically the dynamic masses of the population of this country.

It is necessary to assure it solid foundations in the economic and social order.

I cannot envisage setting forth here all that we have undertaken and will undertake unceasingly to raise the standard of living of the rural and urban circles.

Therefore, I shall limit myself to reviewing, within the framework of our preoccupations of today, some questions which appear to me to overshadow the others both by their present importance and by the significant nature of the solutions that we wish to apply to them.

They concern the peasant farm communities and the cooperatives, the land policy, the problem of individual credit and finally, the evolution of our social legislation.

These matters sometimes have intimate points of contact with what I have just treated.

### **Farming**

The peasant farm settlements—these native communities for which the King has just recently recalled the extreme necessity proclaimed by his august father as early as 1933—are among the first that we shall have to think of organizing according to the principles that I have just set forth.

It is known that the majority were a success; we are familiar with the difficulties of the others.

One will recall their goal, the principles that guide them, the very varied means they employ and the collaboration they require on the part of the numerous services of the State, for the realization of their economic and social objectives.

The most obvious harm that those—fortunately a rare few—who have known only partial successes, or even failures, have suffered, arises from an insufficient study of the political contingencies of the region and a too meager collaboration of the territorial authorities, not only with those of other services, but also and especially with the native authorities.

Undoubtedly, the peasant farm communities are above all technical agricultural and economic enterprises. In order to enter upon the preliminary studies, then execute them, economists and especially agronomists are required. It is in the land developments of various regions of the Congo that several of them—among the best—have established their finest records and realized remarkable things. But no matter how much they desire to elevate their work, no matter what care they may take to integrate it in a more vast whole where political, social and human elements also figure, they remain by vocation, by experience and administrative necessity, specialists. Their action—meritorious and essential—calls for the complement of another specialized action: that of the territorial authorities which must also be exercised in the preliminary studies concerning the political and land rights of the groups involved, then during the difficult period of the first organizations, and finally becoming customary when people and things are settled.

For political formation in a rural milieu, what better and more propitious field of action could one imagine than these circumscribed



and well-ordered areas where coöperating populations are assembled, which are blending their activities and following plans that are at the same time stable and flexible? Since these people have been enlightened first of all, our civilizing action can be applied among them with a precise and efficient variety of methods.

There, there are rights to be defined, to be respected, to be reconciled; lands to be chosen, to be parceled out, to be fertilized; individual real estate property to be conferred and a cadastral survey to be organized; births, marriages, deaths to be recorded and a bureau of vital statistics to be established and developed; consultations to be organized, cares to be bestowed; children to train, people to educate, techniques to be taught; in short, a new society to be created with the participation of the populations whose activity—soon a leading one in these chosen circles—exerted in common by the chief and the representatives of the masses, would be subject to popular control and European guardianship, according to the methods which I have described to you.

### Coöperatives

It is also in these circles—better organized in all respects than the majority of the other circles of the bush—that we have thought of promoting, more than elsewhere perhaps, the coöperative movement.

This movement, whose provisory legal basis is the decree of August 16th, 1949, is distinguished from the coöperative system as we have known it in Western Europe. The European coöperatives arise from private initiative and the laws were only applied a posteriori to regulate and aid them. In the Congo, to the contrary, the Government, convinced that the coöperative system is an important factor of economic and social progress, has tried to respect the commitments that it had made, in April 1944, at the General Conference of the Labor Organization of Philadelphia. These commitments were ratified, in January 1955, by the International Convention on Social Policy in the non-metropolitan territories which obliged it to institute, favor and assist producer and consumer coöperatives. In Africa, the legislation preceded the coöperatives, while in Europe it followed them.

Does this mean that our work is artificial? Indeed, not. Here, as in all things, did not the education of primitive people require the State to create coöperatives and demonstrate their functioning?

In application of the experimental regime installed for five years by the decree of 1949, some 39 native coöperatives have been founded, including 87,500 members. The agricultural coöperatives of production represent about half the number of the associations, but they have

nearly 85,000 members. Since the decree went into effect, 4 coöperatives have been dissolved. This method was destined to lead in the beginning, to several disappointments; certain recent reports confirm this.

In order to apply a remedy where it is needed, we have sought the causes of the defeats or the inadequate successes. Among them must be placed the lack of preliminary studies worked out carefully enough from the point of view of economic utility and profit-earning capacity, the deviation from the principles by the administrative authorities who thought more of facilitating their own action than in favoring the coöperative members, errors of administration committed by responsible incompetents or negligent persons, slovenly control; in short, a lack of application, a faltering perseverance and a guilty indifference on the part of those on which one has the right to depend the most.

To that are added the faults that the decree of 1949 has in itself, which is mainly that it works in opposition at the same time to the principles and the realities, notably in prohibiting coöperative unions and in giving too liberal powers to the administration and too restrained powers to the coöperative members.

Strict instructions have recently been given to correct the situation. I seize the opportunity which is offered to me to again remind the Provincial Governors of the pressing necessity for each of them to concern himself personally with all that which relates to the coöperatives, their administration, their expansion and the scrupulous application of the law which rules them.

Moreover, in order to keep the vow of the legislator of 1949, we have, after the deliberation of the Permanent Delegation, sent to the Department a plan for modifying its provisory decree which takes into account the experience gained thus far.

Certain adversaries of the coöperative movement—there are several—will be tempted perhaps to rejoice in the errors which I believed it my duty to admit to you.

They would be wrong. First of all, because it was necessary to expect errors at the time of the application, generalized and scattered as it was throughout the territory, of a regime which requires as much of initiative and brisk enthusiasm as of actual competence and attentive supervision. Then, because side by side with a few failures, we count a much greater number of encouraging experiences and even obvious successes. Finally, in line with our fundamental thought, our plans which are defined, the unceasingly more generous assistance to a colonist settlement growing daily, it would be illogical and besides inadmissible to wish that a branch of the native economy with which it exists should fail or progress only with timidity. This is especially true



because the prosperity of the colonist settlement is linked to that of all the inhabitants of this country. We have said it again and again—there are so many diverse forms of understanding and of collaboration for those who sincerely desire them and wish to put them in operation.

The price to be paid for so many conceived projects, so many reforms in progress, so many experiments which necessitate perpetual adjustment is inevitably delay.

Certain people are astonished and complain—especially, as is natural, in the circles directly concerned—about the slowness with which we have applied the decrees of February 1953 on the accession of natives to real estate property.

#### **Natives to acquire real estate**

We have been, the very first in this respect, to burn with impatience, realizing how much this delay would retard the progress of the native middle class and, more generally, the installation of one of the most innovative measures and one most likely to bring about profound changes, that has been applied in recent times.

For, its economic and social scope will be considerable. "To grant to the Congolese," as the texts proclaim, "the enjoyment of all the real estate rights provided by written law," is to confer upon them the possibility of becoming title holders of actual guaranteed rights, to use them freely and conveniently within the limits which only the law may fix; to settle and mortgage their heritage economically; to have recourse to mortgage credit.

But it was certainly necessary to yield to the evidence and admit the reasons which the heads of service brought forth to justify the impossibility of going more quickly. It is not, indeed, without infinite precautions that one can put into effect, in an immense territorial area, a precise system or organization of real estate rights, with all the legal, economic and social implications that it embodies at a time when nothing was yet provided for in this domain, when all the indispensable opinions remained to be gathered, the collaboration to be obtained and the specialized personnel to be recruited.

Oddly enough, in the centers where the problem was most urgent, it was necessary to organize the cadastral survey, set up the administration and train the personnel.

In large measure, the difficulties are today surmounted and resolved in the following manner.

The Office of the African Cities—whose cooperation has been sought in the settlements where it is established because of its related activities

and its more flexible organization—is charged with the surveying and the demarcation of boundaries of the lands placed at its disposal; it will do this according to a plan and an order decided by mutual agreement between the Administration and itself. The conditions and the methods of this collaboration have been agreed upon in the belief that the Office will give the maximum of efficiency to the accomplishment of its task.

For the lands other than those of the Office, we shall go forward, starting from the basis which we have. In the chief provincial towns, the urbanistic studies are advanced enough to permit land development, if not by districts, at least by blocks limited by public thoroughfares; there, the Cadastral Service will establish its land developments and will proceed with the surveying and parceling according to the directions of the town-planners. Besides, the land developments would be best completed with the means and personnel that the local authorities have at their disposal; the parcels of land will be delimited provisionally and sold or rented without guarantee of area.

This work—I am sketching here only the outstanding features—will be executed everywhere with the maximum of precision that circumstances will permit, if it is not perfect, the excuse will be found in the will which animates us not to wait and in the obligation to resign ourselves sometimes to the "almost" when one cannot do better.

As for the administration of the real estate domain, it will be assured, according to the case, either by the Colony, or by the native communities as soon as they will have become owners of their land grants.

We shall have thus done the maximum that is necessary and sufficient to satisfy urgent necessities, to resolve in a practical way the problem of accession of natives to private real estate property.

Henceforward and everywhere where they will usefully desire it, the Congolese people will be in a position to acquire real estate, fully and completely, to dispose of it prudently, to exhaust all its economic possibilities and, notably through mortgage credit, to have recourse to a new efficient and flexible means of amplifying their activities and giving a more competitive luster to their enterprises.

#### **Credit available to natives**

On different occasions, in our preceding speeches, we have emphasized the considerable and often essential importance of credit in the formation and the development of this native middle class, which has preoccupied us for already such a long time, and in the raising to a higher standard the living conditions of the native population in general.

Since that time, beyond decisions of a fragmentary nature which we have taken, to wit: in executing the vows formulated in 1952 by the Government Council, we have pursued our studies in order to arrive in matters of credit, at more organic, comprehensive arrangements.

These studies conclude with the observation that two kinds of measures should be taken.

The first concerns on the one hand, the capacity of the natives to borrow, and on the other hand, the authorization for certain groups and individuals to lend.

Various previous texts indeed threaten to prohibit making advances to natives, except in certain cases and under very strict conditions; others provided for various methods which prevented the expansion of credit.

These provisions had to be made flexible in such a way that, while assuring the security of loans, they would permit and favor the recourse to credit on the part of a great number of categories of borrowers for numerous categories of operations.

This reform was realized in the texts, which the Permanent Delegation approved in its session before the last.

The second order of measures—at least as important—concerns the creation and the setting up of credit organisms following a structure which would meet necessities, constantly multiplied and varied, which the complex evolution of the country creates.

And first of all, there is a form of credit which we will not consider; it is private credit, in all its forms, which is in the hands of banking, mortgaging and other enterprises, in the organization and administration of which the State is not to intervene, except under circumstances of exceptional gravity which are not to be envisaged here.

What concerns us is public credit, which is created and administered upon the initiative, under the care, with the intervention or under the control of the public authority.

### **Three kinds of credit**

I shall divide it, for the requirements of my report, into:

- 1° real estate credit,
- 2° urban credit which is subdivided into productive credit and social credit, and
- 3° rural credit which is subdivided in the same way.

*Real estate credit*—outside of special agreements between certain employers and the members of their personnel—is extended exclusively

up to now from what has been called the Loan Fund, which is supplied by official subsidies. The Loan Fund does not enjoy the civil status of a body corporate: each year, on the basis of estimates established by the Provincial Governors, credits are inscribed in the general budget. Their management is entrusted, according to rules voted upon by the administration, to officials of the Colony.

This regime has given full satisfaction up to now. It is, however, becoming a burden, especially in the great centers, and it may be foreseen that it will become unbearable in the future if it remains in the hands of the State services.

A few months ago it had been considered to remove the latter and reserve for the Office of African Cities the credit operations relating to the buildings which it had constructed. But, taking into account that the office is, above all, engaged in the building of native cities and the construction of houses, it was thought better to confine its role to its town-planning works, the establishment of infrastructure and of construction, rather than to set itself up as an institution of real estate credit. It is, in any case, the solution which was adopted in Leopoldville and which will probably be extended to all the centers where the Office is working: the latter will yield the buildings it has constructed to the Colony as soon as they are completed; and the Colony, through the intermediary of the Loan Fund, will take charge with the natives of all the subsequent operations.

For the reasons that we have just given, the moment is at hand to think of a definite solution for the future, as soon as we shall have to face a much more considerable number of operations.

### **The Real Estate Office**

We see this solution in the creation of a Real Estate Office in the establishment of which would intervene:

1. the Colony which would pursue, but only as a participant, the role that it fulfills at present;
2. certain native communities;
3. the National Savings Bank which, collecting the savings of the natives would contribute to making real estate loans to those among them who seek them;
4. the private and the individual enterprises, whether native or European, which would desire to become part of the office.

The object of the office would be real estate operations of all kinds, intending to favor the accession of natives to private property, and



carried on with the financial guarantee of the Colony, under more favorable conditions than those which private real estate enterprises offer to the economically strong, whether they be Europeans or natives.

As the Colony does today, the Real Estate Office would buy the dwellings of the Office of African Cities, while the latter, in executing its program, would continue to construct them. The Real Estate Office would pursue its object in mortgaging real estate properties regularly registered in the name of natives in virtue of the legislation of February 1953.

The Real Estate Office will not however be able to extend its activity to the entire territory of the Colony; in the beginning, it will even limit its activity only to the great centers. Therefore, we will have to maintain, for the interior, the present Loan Fund which will continue there its operations, drawing inspiration from the principles and conditions applied by the Real Estate Office.

*Urban credit* would be that which, in the most advanced centers and regions of the Congo, would have for its object to stimulate, by the granting of loans, the creation and the development of autochthon enterprises of small and moderate importance.

We have to make a distinction between productive credit and social credit.

Productive urban credit would be that which would be granted under normal conditions of time, of interest and of amortization, to native enterprises, individual or collective, capable of furnishing the habitually required guarantees.

It would be extended by the Society of Credit for Colonist Communities and Industry whose recently revised status permits, from now on, loans to natives. They are thus placed—as I have expressed the vow in my speech of 1953 before your Council—in what concerns credit, on a level of strict equality with the Europeans.

Urban social credit would be that which would be instituted for the small native enterprises offering only insufficient guarantees and in favor of which, because they would be considered worthy of being maintained and developed, special conditions would be granted.

It would be put in operation by the National Savings Bank, which by reason of the social role that it must normally fulfill, would voluntarily engage in unprofitable operations whose annual deficit would be covered by the Colony.

However, in order to inculcate in the natives the necessary sense of their responsibilities, the National Savings Bank would require of its native clients that the loans contracted at the bank be guaranteed by mutual surety companies, whose creation and organization would be

founded on the solidarity that the natives traditionally practice among themselves.

*Rural credit* would be that which would be instituted in the regions of the interior where neither the Society of Credit for the Colonist and Industry, nor the National Savings Bank would have any branches and which, in the bush, would strive to achieve the same objectives as urban credit in the more advanced centers and regions.

It would be subdivided, as the latter, into productive and social credit.

It would be organized, in conformity with the vow expressed by your Council in 1952, only by institutions existing in the bush, namely the Native Districts, to which the Colony or credit organisms accepted by it, could procure the necessary funds if they needed them.

It would be practiced according to the principles and the norms provided for urban credit, according to whether it would be rural productive (habitual guarantees required from the borrower and normal conditions) or rural social (special conditions, mutual surety companies and deficit guaranteed by the Colony).

In the exercise of their functions concerning credit operations, the native authorities would be assisted by mixed administrative councils, whose members, Europeans and natives, would be appointed by the Provincial Governor.

Thus a complete network of means of credit would be laid out which, throughout the Congo territory, would offer to each native opportunities according to his merits and capacities.

#### **Native labor conditions**

The various provisions which I have treated up to the present concern, principally, independent natives. Now the number of natives bound to labor contracts were on December 31, 1954, 1,146,284.

Let us see rapidly how the future appears for them, taking into account the measures we have recently instituted and those which we soon intend to take in their favor.

A little after the last war, one realized that the profound economic and social transformation, which had just been accomplished, required the complete revision of the fundamental statute on native labor. This statute, promulgated in 1922, had given satisfaction for a quarter of a century but was suddenly found outmoded by the existing order of things.

However, when the plan, which was definitively worked out, after long consultation with all the interests involved, was submitted to the



procedure prior to its promulgation, it appeared that the ideas concerning colonial guardianship had evolved in such a way that such legislation which would apply only to the native worker would be interpreted—despite its generous innovations—as reflecting our intention to maintain discrimination. This is a practice we have never accepted as a matter of principle and which we have, moreover, promised to make disappear as rapidly as the native population advances.

Thus, in the course of the debates of the Colonial Council at the beginning of the year 1954, the idea of a single fundamental statute took shape. This statute, applicable to blacks and to whites, would be uniform in its philosophy; its methods would be determined exclusively in terms of the professional capacity of the salaried worker and the differentiation of the needs resulting from expatriation. However, it seemed that the drawing up of a unified labor charter would be a long, arduous task. It called for a minute and prudent study; otherwise, difficulties would loom up, as soon as applied, which could have made questionable the timeliness of its principle.

Therefore, the Colonial Council wisely proposed to limit itself, in the meantime, to completing and modifying the important points of the decree of March 16, 1922 which could not be postponed.

The revision of the decree on the labor contract thus ended in the decree of June 30, 1954, whose most important innovations find their inspiration in the corresponding provisions of the decree on the employment contract, an exception having been made for penal sanctions.

Although limited, the fortunate result of this revision is to prepare for the future: from today, the legal statute of the employment contract and the legal statute of the labor contract present numerous points in common. Their daily application will facilitate the great work of unification that the legislator had decided to undertake. Its realization will mark a memorable date in our rise towards the Belgo-Congolese community.

#### **How to classify the workers**

Among the new provisions of the decree of June 30, 1954, there is one which will strongly influence the structure of our future labor law. This provision tends to encourage the practice of the total payment in cash, when the salary attains a sum fixed by the provincial authority.

Up to now, the Government tried to guarantee to the worker the minimum conditions of existence by fixing a minimum compensation calculated exclusively in terms of his necessities. But it was conceded that once his essential needs were covered, any further increase in salary

ought to correspond to an increase in his production and his professional capacities as a worker.

More than one third of the workers today receive remunerations which exceed the fixed minimum amount by more than 25%. For them the problem is no longer to satisfy their necessities. It consists of establishing fair wages for their labor.

Thus the problem of the professional classification of manpower is raised.

It was already taken up, on several occasions, by your assembly, but only to the limited extent of defining the role of the examining boards. You took it up again in 1953, for the discussion of a system of classification applicable to the native workers of the Colony. In inviting the private sector to express its sentiments on a measure intended for its own personnel, the Government intended to emphasize the importance of its repercussions on the improvement of social conditions in the country. By the professional classification it assigned itself a triple objective:

1. it wished to pay a fair salary for work done;
2. it intended to promote professional qualification by encouraging emulation among the working masses;
3. it wished to inspire in the worker a sense of his responsibilities without which his social evolution would be doomed to failure.

The engineers of the office Ingeco-Gombert, assisted by the engineers of the Labor Inspection Office, have completed the first phase of this work. Inquiries pursued throughout the territory of the Colony have enabled the compilation of a list of the various duties performed by labor in the Government service; their description has been detailed; they have been classified.

Fixing a scale of salaries for the classes of labor will constitute the second phase of the study undertaken. From this instant we shall enter upon the course that the legislator of 1954 invites us to take in having recourse, as much as possible to the total salary. Who does not see that the black laborer whose work will be thus paid for will not be brought much closer to the position of the white employee?

Besides, it is evidently desirable that the decree of June 25, 1949 on the employment contract which is being revised should lead to a single statute of work.

Among the measures which may contribute to this unification, I shall mention first those which will allow local engagements of workers; you know them from having debated on them in your previous sessions.



I also mention those which facilitate the accession of the best workers to certain rights contained in the decree on the employment contract and, most particularly, to those which do not find their reason for being in expatriation.

Already in 1949, the legislator was concerned with bringing about, in favor of the natives whose advancement and production justified it, the passage of a law which would change the legal status of the worker to that of the employee. The measure was proposed by the Governor General himself. This initiative was unfortunately ineffective—a single request for assimilation was introduced since 1949—because among the laws, none allowed for a gradual application. Therefore, the proposed reform tends to assure the desirable flexibility in authorizing the admission of the natives to the benefit of the decree on the employment contract, whether for all its provisions, or only for certain ones relating to the advantages granted by their employer.

The revision of the decree of 1922 on the labor contract and that of the decree of 1949 on the employment contract, both tend, therefore, towards the unity of the fundamental labor statute in the Congo. The stages that we have just passed through and those which we shall go through in the months to come permit us to hope that—when the desired unification in law will be realized—a great number of Congolese will already enjoy, in fact, a complete equality of treatment with the Europeans.

This tendency towards equality manifests itself besides in a number of other domains of our social legislation.

#### **Equality of black and white workers**

It is thus that the Congolese worker already benefits from a regime identical to that of the employee in the matter of reparation of damages resulting from accidents at work and occupational diseases. The decree of December 20, 1945 for Europeans and of August 1st, 1945 for the natives could easily be unified without changing too much their methods of application.

The unification has already been realized, in that which concerns social security and health protection insurance, by the decree of March 21st, 1950, which entrusted to the Governor General the power of taking all useful measures in these domains. On the basis of this text, numerous regulations are now applicable to any native or non-native employed in the places of work.

In 1950, the Labor Inspection Office was organized in such a way that the control of labor was effected by services whose duties established no distinction between native workers and Europeans.

In 1951, we created family allowances for the benefit of the native workers as we had introduced them, in 1948, for the Europeans. However, if the principles are identical, the methods of application are very different. Just now, however, compensation experiments are in progress in Bukavu and Elisabethville, which, if they turn out well, will permit a rapprochement of the two laws.

I strongly wish that the civil labor laws, with which you will have to concern yourself, may be applied as well to the workers as to the members of the European personnel. They deal with the regulation of the workshop, the number of hours of work, the day of rest on Sunday, the protection of the woman and the child.

Finally, the last case that I shall mention: you know that the Minister of Colonies has set up this year, in Brussels, a commission whose task it is to proceed with the study of the important problem of old age security for workers.

Nevertheless, I call it once more to the express attention of the interested parties as I did even two years ago concerning their accession to common studies—that progressively and in all domains, the Congolese may be assimilated with the Europeans, implies necessarily that they learn to assume equal responsibilities.

The burden of promoting the sense of responsibility in the native masses, at the same time as their material and moral well-being, appears again in the encouragement the Government proposes to give to mutual insurance action.

#### **Mutual insurance**

For more than one hundred years, free mutual insurance has known in Belgium considerable success, because it has rendered and will render there each day immeasurable service to all classes of society: the farmer, the workman, the employee, the merchant. A wide scattering of risks, an unceasingly growing accumulation of the means of action achieved by the union of efforts of the greatest possible number of members, has permitted mutual insurance to succeed where the isolated efforts of the individual remained doomed to failure. This success was particularly brilliant in the domain of health benefits.

In the Congo, as far as medical benefits are concerned, we still know the regime of public assistance. But public assistance is here considerably more generous than it has ever been in Belgium: the medical action of the Government reaches practically three-quarters of the native population, the remaining quarter being the responsibility of the employers by application of the social laws.

It is obvious that this free medical assistance, which constitutes one of the most apparent forms of our paternalistic policy, will have to disappear sooner or later. It does not, indeed, enter into the normal duties of the State to give medical care to those who inhabit its territory and it is not normally incumbent upon the employer to care for those of his workers who become ill. In a country well equipped medically, in a well-balanced economy where each one accomplishes his task correctly, the cost of labor—whether it concerns salary for the worker or the selling price of the harvest for the peasant—must reach a level which permits the native to take care of his own health and that of his family, directly, or by the intervention of organisms to which he will voluntarily have recourse in the manner of procedure used in Belgium.

We have not reached that point yet, but as I said at the time of the inauguration of the Medical Days in Leopoldville last year, we know that we must lead the Congo towards this goal.

Mutual insurance, founded on the traditional solidarity of our autochthon populations, must become, as it was in the home country, an instrument of education for the masses. It will inspire them with the spirit of initiative and the sense of responsibility which will disengage them progressively from the paternalism of our present policy.

### III—THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL STATE OF THE COLONY

Before concluding, it now remains for me to give you—according to tradition—a brief synthesis of the economic and financial situation in the course of the period 1954.

On the whole, the past year presents the characteristics of a period of strengthened consolidation.

Exports have increased in volume and, for reasons which I shall state, in value. The same was true of imports. In total, the terms of exchange have improved even more by comparison to 1953, which means that, for the exchange value of the same quantity of exported products, we can buy an added quantity of imported products.

In the interior of the country one has been able to note easy investments, the favorable pursuit of the development of the manufacturing industry, a definite expansion of the domestic market, the increase in the purchasing power of the salaries, and correlatively, of savings; finally and especially, the stability of prices.

The financial situation remains favorable: light increase in the profits of companies, comfortably filled treasury, reserves of exchange and cover of the currency practically unchanged, increase in receipts and budgetary surplus which exceeds by very far the estimated surplus.

Two elements, however, will have to hold our attention: the growth in the volume of bank credit as well as the increase in the number of non-payments and protests.

#### **Foreign commerce**

First, let us devote some comments to foreign commerce.

Exports have reached 1,347,000 tons, against 1,178,000 tons in 1953.

In value, the estimate, based on the exit duties, shows a slight decline: 20,200 million francs against 20,400 million.

These figures must, however, be corrected, taking into account the lag which occurred in 1953, and still more in 1954, between base values and the quotation prices. Therefore, the results of the Central Bank of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, which are based on the collection of foreign exchange, give a more realistic picture. Accord-



ing to the statistics of this organism, exports—reexports included—have attained 24,800 million, against 22,400 million in 1953.

The structure of exports has hardly changed: the balance between the vegetal and the mineral products has been maintained. In the mineral group must be pointed out an advance in cobalt, zinc, especially of manganese and of copper, and a decline in tin-bearing ores and of tin. This decline is explained by the expiration of American contracts and by a change in the activity of companies of tin-bearing minerals to mixed ores.

The index in the unit value of vegetal products exported went up from 107.8 in 1953 to 115.5 in 1954. This rise is due to coffee. The rates of this produce have, however, declined in the course of the second semester, but this decline was compensated for by the improvement in the rate of rubber and palm oil.

The index of unit value of mineral products exported has remained practically stationary: 161.6 against 161.9.

At present, most of the rates seem to be balanced at a very satisfactory level.

The imports have increased in tonnage and in value, without coming up to the exceptional figures due to overstocking of the years 1951 and 1952: 1,627,000 tons for a value of 18,500 million francs, against 1,432,000 tons for 18,200 million in 1953.

We have therefore bought more. We have also bought differently: more consumer and capital goods, less equipment.

The increase in imports of consumer goods should be considered to a certain extent in direct relation to the increasing buying power of the native population; it is also due to the rebuilding of stocks which, by the way, tend to grow to excess in certain goods, for instance, in the textile business.

The increase in imports of capital goods is noticeable principally in motor fuel, cement, and to a lesser degree, in paints, tires and papers.

For equipment, the slowing down can be explained by the completion of important private investment programs.

The last element which merits being pointed out: the index of the average unit value of the products imported has fallen from 107.7 in 1953 to 104.9 in 1954. In December, this index was established at 102, thus reaching its lowest level in four years. This favorable evolution is to be credited to our "open-door policy."

#### **The domestic market**

Now here is a short analysis of the domestic situation.

According to the incomplete figures which we possess, the study of

national revenue for 1954 is not finished—the total amount of regular investments can be considered as materially equal to that of 1953.

In private investments, can be noted a decline in the imports of equipment (7,400 million against 8,700 million), as well as a serious lessening of the issuing of capital (1.142 million against 1.834 million).

On the other hand, public investments are clearly on the upswing, due to the accelerated rhythm of the progress of the Ten-Year Plan (6,200 million against 5,600 million).

We are witnessing a continuous expansion of the domestic market.

Progress of local traffic: on the railroad from Matadi to Leopoldville alone, this traffic has exceeded the record figure for 1953—1,227,000 tons against 1,009,000 tons.

Minor industry adds to and diversifies its production: we record noticeable increases in the cement sectors (345,000 tons against 248,000), paints and varnishes, beer, textiles and footwear; local production of cement exceeds by far the volume imported. Remarkable element: building permits have been issued for 619 million francs in Leopoldville and 301 million in Elisabethville, against 350 million and 206 million in 1953; these figures largely exceed the previous records, which were for Leopoldville, 527 million in 1952 and for Elisabethville, 285 million in 1951.

The Society of Credit for the Colonist and Industry has granted 132 million loans against 124 million in 1953.

The industrial, commercial and agricultural firms exceed the number of 17,000, of which nearly 9,000 are European and more than 8,000, native: this is an important indication of progress in commercial specialization.

The purchasing power of wage-earners has enjoyed in the course of the fiscal period, a notable increase: the total remuneration has risen from the index of 177 to the index of 187, the salary in cash from the index 192 to the index 206. Paper money in circulation is besides, also on the rise: 4,700 million against 4,400 million. A very encouraging factor: the deposits of savings by natives has risen from 156 million to 193 million.

Finally, the level of prices has remained stable: the European index of the cost of living is established at a slight decrease (307.7 against 308.3), the native index, at a slight increase (128.8 against 128.6). This stability—you will remember—was to my mind of absolute necessity: it must remain one of our foremost objectives.

The total outlook is, as you see, very satisfactory.

On the financial plane, finally, the situation continues to be favorable.

The companies have made, in 1954, 6,800 million francs in profits.



which represents a very slight increase in comparison with 1953. The dividends distributed are 4,300 million against 3,800 million. These figures emphasize the amplitude of auto-financing.

However, I must point out to you two elements to watch.

In the first place, the volume of bank credit has been considerably increased 6,200 million against 4,800 million. This accretion is due, in the order of importance:

1. to the increase, already mentioned, of the imports of consumer and capital goods, that is to say, to a movement of rebuilding of stocks;
2. to the intense activity in the domain of construction: I have just cited the figures;
3. to the creation of numerous enterprises of small and moderate importance.

In the second place, the non-payment protests have risen from 251 million to 340 million. This progression would be disturbing if it were the sign of a generalized uneasiness. In reality, it is due to certain insolvencies which, considering the economy as a whole, constitute isolated facts.

A remarkable event has been the considerable rise in the value of colonial securities on the stock exchanges of Brussels and Antwerp: their index reached 687 in December 1954, against 464 in January, while on the same dates, the general index was 321 against 242.

In the public area, finances have known a prosperity at least equal to that of 1953.

The treasury remains comfortably filled, but we must anticipate that the growing expenses of the Ten-Year Plan will tap these resources more and more severely.

The reserves in gold and convertible currency are increasing slightly, the coefficient of cover remaining practically unchanged (62.64% against 62.74%).

The budgetary receipts, finally, are also increasing slightly (9,900 million against 9,200 million in 1953).<sup>\*</sup> According to the provisory statement established on March 31, 1955, the budgetary surplus of 1954 is about 1,600 million.

#### **King Baudouin's visit**

This year which will mark, as the others, a long period of work and efforts, of difficulties and of joys, of plans and of realizations, of spiritual

progress and of material prosperity, will remain, for us all, the year of the King.

The year which will have permitted the Congo to know its King; the King to become acquainted with his Congo.

From it will arise, I believe I can say it here, a mutual and warm satisfaction. On the national level, a fruitful rapprochement: Belgium will love her Colony better, the Congo will become still more attached to its Mother Country. In the eyes of the world, in an increased prestige, the Belgians of Europe and those of Africa will appear more united than ever and their work more beautiful and its success, more dazzling. The spectacle that they will have presented to him, in these times of revolt and emancipation, will be, at the same time, a triumph and a demonstration; the demonstration, made to the anti-colonialists, that men of very diverse origins, of very different formation and social levels, can—because they are moved by interests that they wish to be common—understand and love one another with confidence and enthusiasm.

"The King has revealed to us the Congo. The Congo has revealed to us our King," wrote a Belgian journalist after the royal voyage. Balance sheet, magnificent but incomplete. For it is to the entire world that the King revealed the Congo and to the world as well that the Congo revealed the King!

This was not at all, as certain writers have stated, a sort of miracle. The causes of the event were human and natural.

The King knew that the Congo waited for Him and that, without having done anything to change the behavior of the people or camouflage the face of things, it was ready to welcome Him. The King knew that He would be received in a great country—His country—where in an incredibly short time imposing things had been accomplished. In a great country open to all, which is visited by people of good and bad faith, where nothing is to be hidden. In a country which in the midst of its own difficulties and its avowed deficiencies is reaching zealously for a unanimously proclaimed ideal. A country preserved up to now from sterile disagreements and which always took care not to create difficulties for the King.

The Congo, for its own part, wished to see, approach, conquer its Sovereign, the supreme Chief, who personifies the country, its genius and its greatness. It had decided to celebrate His visit suitably and joyously. It knew that it deserved His confidence and His fondness. It anticipated that the King would be content among simple people, straightforward and direct, confronted with difficult problems which—seriously and all together—they wish to resolve.

And the foreseen event—not the miracle—was produced.



As soon as the tall white silhouette of a young and imposing man appeared under the tropical sun, who radiated at the same time majesty, simplicity and goodness—and who was the King—the heart of the crowds melted, the uproar arose and the triumph burst forth. From the first instant, the fervent smile of thousands of ecstatic and happy faces answered the new and happy smile of the King!

And the triumph was prolonged for long weeks—without any other barriers except those which were necessary to shelter the august visitor from the enthusiasm of His subjects—among the populations of Leopoldville and those of the Lower-Congo, among the people of the Coast and those of Equator, among the Lulua, the Baluba and the Bakuba, among the people of Kamina and of the Katanga, among the Barundi and the Banyarundi, the Bashi and the Pygmies, the Lokele and the Wagenia.

Everywhere the same enthusiasm was apparent. Everywhere the same expression, open and strong, of a straightforward affection. Everywhere the same tribute rendered to the one who—with a sovereign ease and touching gestures—incarnated among the men, the women and the children of this country, the work that had been realized there.

It is there—it has been said and written — that lies the great significance of the explosion of loyalty of which we have been the witnesses.

But men—always—at the same time as they express their gratitude, conceive, unconsciously or not, new hopes.

Our work is far from being completed. In manifesting before the Monarch their approval for what we have done, the populations of the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi have implicitly shown their impatience to see us complete what remains to be done.

Above all, we should not be shocked by this attitude. Our eyes, pampered by the sights of privileged people, should not be blind to the plight of the destitute.

His Majesty, for whom the demonstrations of attachment have been made—undoubtedly because generosity appears as a first mark of His personality—has understood it and wished to announce without delay, the creation of a "King's Fund" which will fill in certain important lacunae of our social action.

Let us follow this eminent example, redoubling efforts—in all the numerous domains where they are solicited—to ameliorate the lot of those whose happiness we wish more than ever.

I do not forget that I am addressing, in saying that, men who have already given so much of their understanding and heart, of their cares and their efforts, their privacy and their own happiness—of whom must be asked still more. But what does it matter what one has given, in the light of what is still to be given, that the work be completed. Despite the hardships of an endless task, one must not consider the contribu-

tions of those who offer unstintingly, nor the eventual ingratitude of those who may receive. The only thing that matters is to go to the end and to succeed.

As for me, if a moment of weariness came upon me one day, I would apply myself to reliving in my heart, against the backdrop of enthusiastic crowds, the vision of the canoer, who came near Yangambi to meet the royal boat, who alone, arms crossed, in the middle of the deserted river, in the setting sun, acclaimed his Sovereign, or yet that of the naked child, at the summit of a hill of Urundi, who ran under the open sky, veering suddenly into the wind of the evening, towards the handsome traveler and shouting, "Baudouin! Baudouin!" the name of the King . . .

If the thing happened to you as well, I am sure that you would do as I.

Long live the King!

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